

Nutria Eradication in California

A review of response efforts

Since 2017, over 400 nutria have been taken from six California counties (primarily Merced County), and in 2018, a breeding population was identified in the legal Delta. Background and current detection information is available on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) [nutria detection webpage](#).

Response effort

California's nutria response effort (Figure 1) is led by CDFW. Both the [California Department of Food and Agriculture \(CDFA\)](#) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services assist with the field effort via surveying and/or trapping. CDFW has created an Incident Command System (ICS), which provides a structured way to designate leadership roles, assign tasks, and coordinate with internal staff, field crews, other agencies, and media. Members of the ICS are drafting a Response Plan and developing a data sharing policy.

Private land access is needed to survey and trap. Private landowners and public agencies are encouraged to [grant temporary access](#).

Interagency coordination

Interagency coordination is led by CDFW to support collaboration across multiple state and federal agencies. Members of the ICS host an interagency meeting on a monthly basis to provide updates on the effort. Interagency meetings focus on coordination of field efforts, gaps in coverage, resource needs, and collaboration with other nutria programs across the country.

Funding

CDFW and other state agencies are providing support for the eradication effort through grants and redirected staff. CDFW is contracting with the USDA Wildlife Services to support a small trapping team through 2020. CDFA acquired two-year funding (\$400,000) through a Budget Change Proposal (BCP) in 2018 to support their survey and population delineation team.

Funding acquired by CDFW:

- [Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Prop 1 - Nutria Eradication Project](#) \$1,125,577 (2017-18)
- [State Wildlife Grant Program](#) \$1,250,000 (2018)
- [Wildlife Conservation Board Riparian Grant Program](#) \$600,000 (2018)

A number of efforts are underway to expand the funding for nutria eradication in California, primarily from state sources.

CDFW is pursuing additional funding through a fiscal year 2019-20 BCP. The BCP would support 10 positions and help fund a dedicated nutria control program. CDFW is requesting \$1.9 million for the first year and annual funding thereafter of \$1.6 million.

Additionally, CDFW is seeking funds from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Prop 1 program to support expansion of the nutria eradication program.

Federal funding contributes significantly to nutria control and eradication efforts in other states (see Case Studies), but it not a significant source in California.

Legislative actions

Assemblymember Quirk's office introduced [AJR-8 Invasive species: federal Nutria Eradication and Control Act of 2003](#) on February 15, 2019, which ultimately seeks to appropriate up to \$4 million in federal funds for the eradication effort.



Case studies from across the US

Chesapeake Bay

The Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Project is considered a success. Since the project's formation in 2002, nearly 14,000 nutria have been removed (none since 2016). Between 2000-2014, eradication efforts cost \$15.8 million. Over 95% of the project is federally funded. A key funding effort to kick start the effort was the Nutria Eradication and Control Act of 2003, which authorized up to \$4 million/year for five years.

Louisiana

Due to the size of the infestation, Louisiana determined that eradication would not be feasible; therefore, a control program was implemented in 2002. To control the population and prevent continued loss of wetlands, an estimated 400,000 nutria need to be taken each year. Most take is conducted through an incentive payment (bounty) program. From 2003-2018

Louisiana paid over \$24 million (up to \$2 million annually) for the take of over 5 million nutria by participants in the bounty program. The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (1990) - LA-03 and LA-04 (1990) provides federal funds to support most of Louisiana's nutria control program.

Pacific Northwest

Currently, there is no state or federally funded nutria response effort in Oregon or Washington. In Oregon, nutria are considered a "predatory animal," which allows private landowners to trap and remove the species, at their own cost. In 2011, Oregon and Washington pursued updating the 2003 Nutria Control Act (S.899), but funds were ultimately not appropriated for nutria control.

Nutria Response Management

